

DCN: 6487

DCN: 6487



BOB TAFT
GOVERNOR
STATE OF OHIO

BRAC Commission

AUG 03 2005

Received

August 1, 2005

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
2005 Base Closure and Realignment Commission
2521 South Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

You and your fellow commissioners are to be commended for the comprehensive manner in which you have approached the daunting task of reviewing the Department of Defense BRAC recommendations. BRAC is a valuable tool in the continuing struggle to wring maximum military capacity out of increasingly scarce fiscal resources.

I have been disturbed, however, by a number of the recommendations regarding Air National Guard assets and, in particular, by the process through which the Air Force arrived at their recommendations. The Air Force did not in any way consult with the States or the Adjutants General. The Air Force committed a number of substantial deviations from the BRAC statutes, which the 178th Fighter Wing (Springfield, OH) and the 179th Airlift Wing (Mansfield, OH) reported in extraordinarily detail. I urge the Commission to review those reports and reject the Air Force recommendations.

You appear to have identified many of the same issues as have we with the Air Force's approach. At your July 18 hearing you requested that the Air Force and the Air National Guard work together to craft for your consideration an alternative to the Air Force recommendations. The Adjutant Generals (TAGs) have since presented to you an alternative plan, and I am fully in support of that proposal.

The TAGs began by looking at the July 14 legal opinion issued by the Commission's Deputy General Counsel. That opinion expressed, among other things, that the purpose of the BRAC Act is to "close or realign excess real estate," and that the Act "is not a vehicle to effect changes in how a unit is equipped or organized." The TAGs have recommended that the Commission remove from consideration the Air Force recommendations that are beyond the scope of the BRAC Act—specifically, those recommendations that deal with the movement of aircraft and personnel from one base to another, establishing "enclave" bases, etc. The Commission should evaluate the remaining recommendations dealing with the real estate, and should determine whether the analyses

of those closings or realignments were proper, and whether any savings actually result to justify the recommendation.

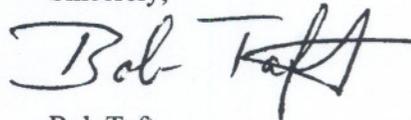
The TAGs have argued that the programmatic approach, in cooperation with the state Governors and the TAGs, is by far a more desirable method for achieving these force structure modifications. It is, in fact, the mechanism that has always been used to effect similar force structure modifications in the past. Removed from the immediacies of the BRAC timelines and the inflexibilities of the legislative process, the programmatic approach will permit the Air Force to evaluate fully the needs of the states, and will better permit the phased transition from old airframes and missions to the airframes and missions of the Future Total Force.

I support the TAGs' proposal, and I urge the Air Force to accept the compromise. But even if the Air Force fails to come to the table, we urge the Commission to move forward with the TAGs' recommendation. The Commission's Deputy Counsel has drawn a relatively bright line between the types of recommendations authorized by the BRAC Act and those not so authorized. The Deputy Counsel went so far as to identify by name the recommendation regarding Mansfield-Lahm Municipal Air Guard Station as one that was not within the intent of the BRAC Act. The Commission should remove those unauthorized recommendations from consideration, and then concentrate on whether the remaining recommendations meet the BRAC goals of maximizing efficiencies, cost savings, and military value.

Even should you ultimately reject the opinion of your own Counsel, I believe that the substantial deviations in the Air Force analysis of the 178th (Springfield, OH) and the 179th (Mansfield, OH) require that you reject the Air Force recommendations for those two installations. I simply cannot understand the logic of removing missions, aircraft, and personnel slots from the only large state able to achieve and maintain greater than 100% strength. I urge you to give full weight to the volumes of evidence previously presented to the Commission documenting the errors and substantial deviations in the Air Force analysis.

Your task is daunting, and I appreciate and thank you for your service to the country. Thank you for your consideration. Please contact my Adjutant General, Major General Greg Wayt, at 614-336-7070 for any additional information you may require in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Taft". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Bob Taft
Governor